



TRICARE Health Care Information Line (HCIL) Use and Experience

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This survey of the TRICARE Beneficiary Delphi Group was undertaken by TMA/C&CS in September 2004 to explore apparent customer difficulty using TRICARE telephone call centers identified in a February 2004 nationwide telephone survey. With regard specifically to HCIL:

- 56% of 199 respondents indicated they had sought general medical treatment advice within the past year, with most calling their clinic, followed by Web sources, followed by about 11% who said they had used TRICARE Health Care Information Lines.
- Consistent with the February 2004 nationwide telephone survey, all three of these sources were cited as significantly easier to use than other TRICARE telephone call centers.
- Although the number of respondents was quite small (8), Web sources seemed more effective than either calls to the clinic or calls to the HCIL in addressing concerns to an extent that the member did not seek routine or immediate medical attention.

OVERVIEW

Background

TMA accomplished a nationwide telephone survey of 4,170 recent TRICARE users in February 2004. That survey found awareness of TRICARE toll-free call centers as an information source is exceptionally high (91.3%) and constituted the most frequently mentioned information source when compared with printed materials, MTF staff, and TRICARE Web sites. However, of over 20 information sources mentioned as difficult to use, call centers other than the “Ask a Nurse” toll free service were more than twice as frequently cited (29.1%) as any other source. In contrast, the “Ask a Nurse” toll free service was the second most highly source for ease of use (64%) and was the top-ranked TRICARE information source (73.5%) for ease of understanding and for providing useful information (75.4%).

Purpose

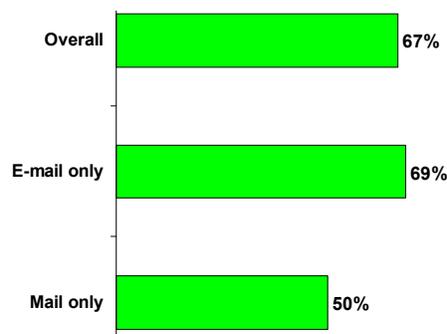
The present Delphi survey was undertaken to identify specific components of the difficulty experienced in using TRICARE call centers by more specifically identifying the types of call centers used, and customer experiences with each type. We anticipate information gathered from this survey will assist in informing a follow-up nationwide telephone study of telephone call center customer support to be conducted within the next few months.

Survey Administration

Hard copy evaluations were sent on 14 September 2004 to 30 council members who previously requested mail communication. A Web-link was E-mailed on 20 September to the remaining 268 council members. A reminder E-mail was sent to nonresponders on 28 September, but no mail follow-up was done.

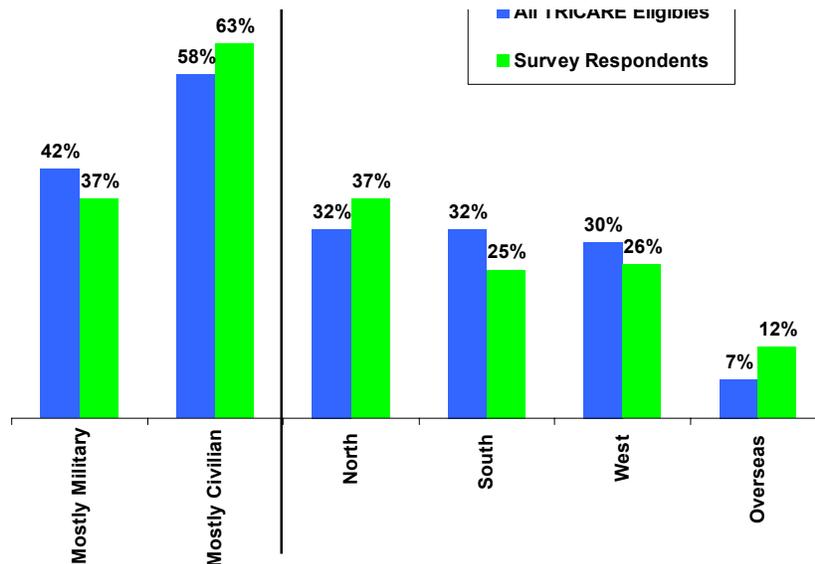
Response Rate

As of 30 September, 199 responses were received, including 15 via mail and 184 via the Web for an overall response rate of 67 percent. This response rate is down 5 percent from the previous survey, The Next TRICARE Handbook.



Respondent Demographics

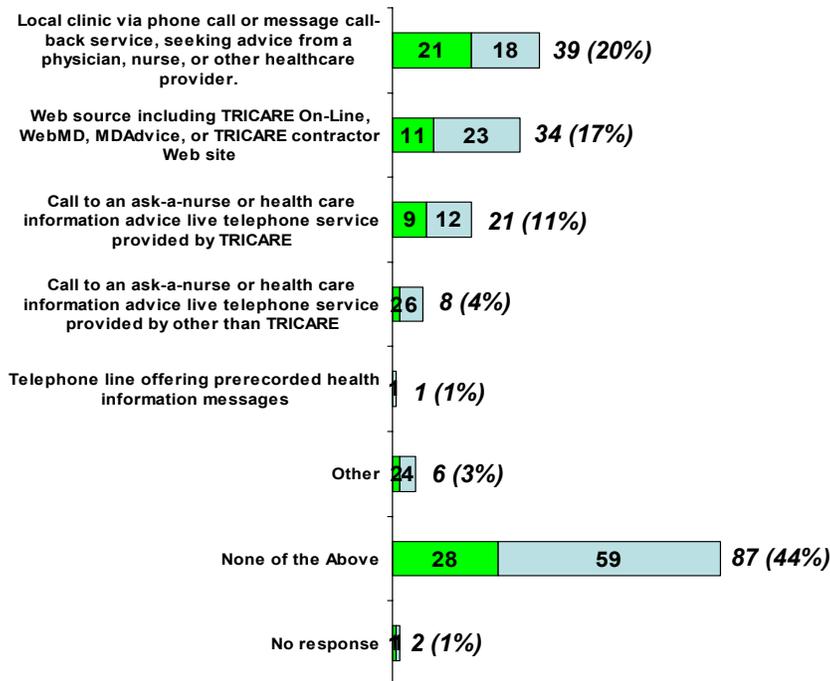
The Delphi Council includes a broad cross-section of volunteer TRICARE beneficiaries from all military Services, and all benefit options. Two demographic parameters particularly relevant to this study of telephone support were whether respondents use primarily the direct care system (military care) vice the purchased care system (civilian care), and which TRICARE region they live in. As shown in the graph below, compared with all 9.1 million TRICARE eligible beneficiaries, the 199 survey respondents are somewhat over representative of the purchased care system, and of the North and Overseas TRICARE Regions. All results shown in this study are unweighted and are uncorrected for these disparities.



RESULTS

Health Care Advice Services:

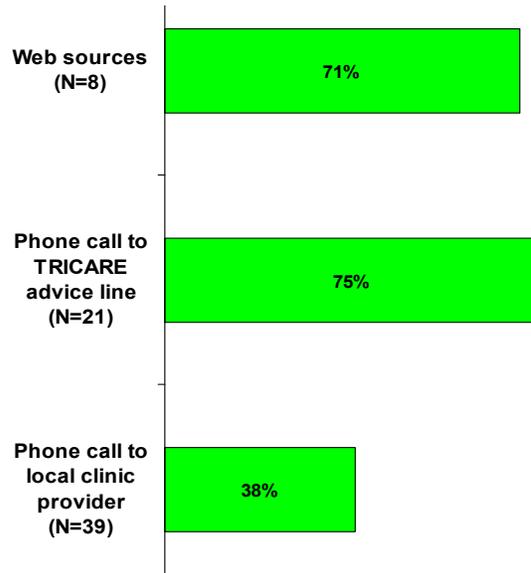
1. **During the past 12 months, have you attempted to use any of the following sources to obtain general medical treatment advice? (Mark the response that applies to your most recent phone call seeking advice, if any.)**
 - Your local clinic (military or civilian) via either a phone call or message call-back service to seek advice from a physician, nurse, or other healthcare provider.
 - A telephone call to a person staffing an ask-a-nurse or other health care information advice live telephone service provided by TRICARE (including either Health Net, Humana, Sierra or TriWest).
 - A telephone call to a person staffing an Ask-A-Nurse or other health care information advice live telephone service provided by a source other than TRICARE.
 - Web sources such as TRICARE On Line, WebMD, MDAdvice, or TRICARE contractor Web site
 - Telephone line offering prerecorded health information messages
 - Other
 - None of the above (*Please skip to question #8*)



Note: The following four slides show results only for the three most frequently cited sources of advice shown above.

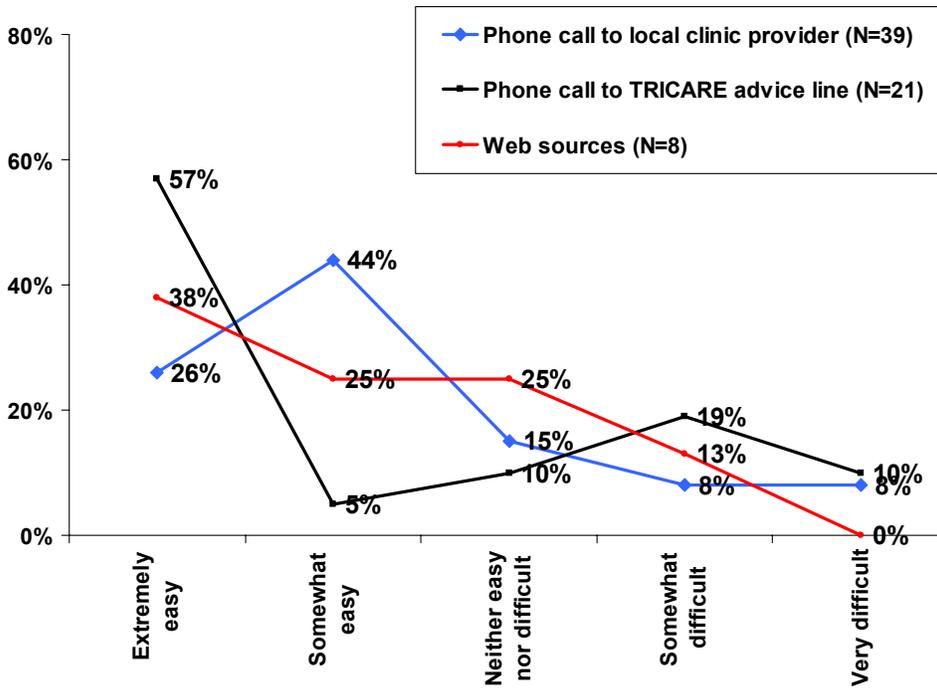
2. Regarding the medical advice service you referenced in question #1, is this service available to you on a 24-hour, 7-day per week basis? (Mark the response that applies best.)

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

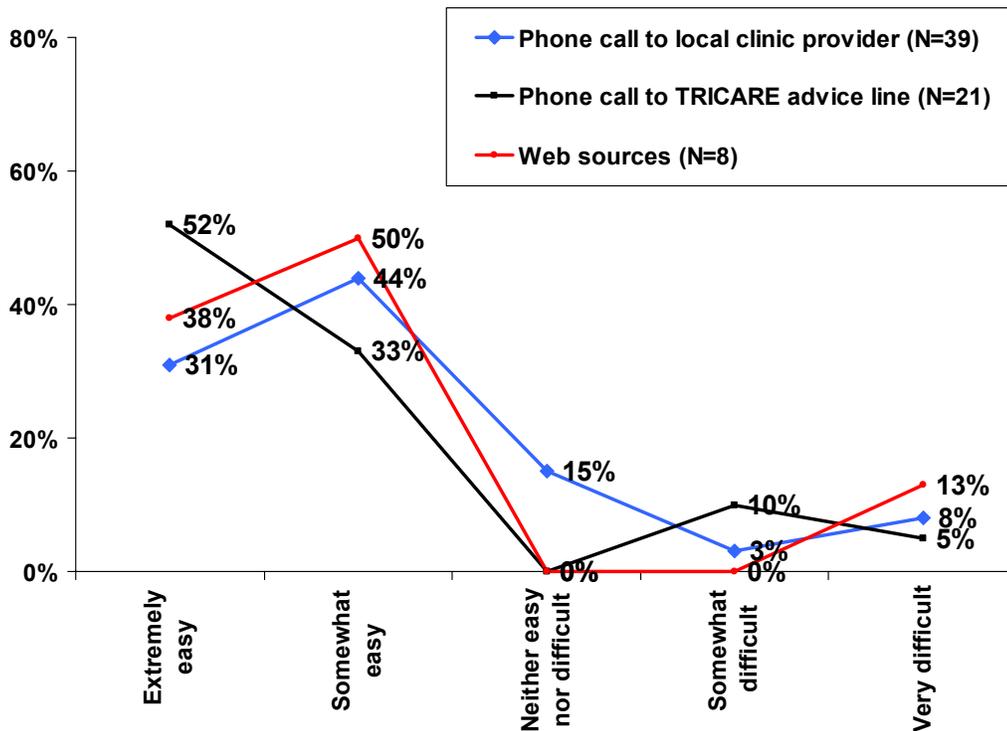


Note: Shown: Percentage responding "Yes."

3. Regarding that same medical advice service, rate your relative ease or difficulty in identifying the proper telephone number or Web address to use. (Mark the response that applies best.)



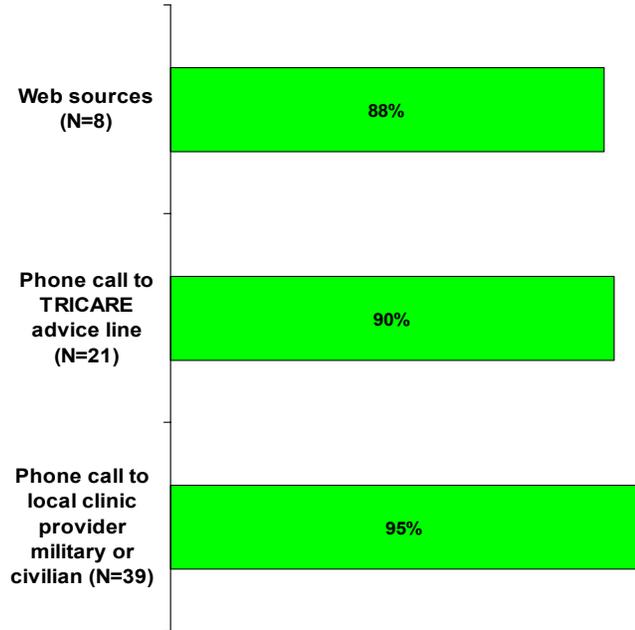
4. After identifying the proper telephone number or Web address for that most recent use, rate the relative ease or difficulty you had in obtaining assistance. (Mark the response that applies best.)



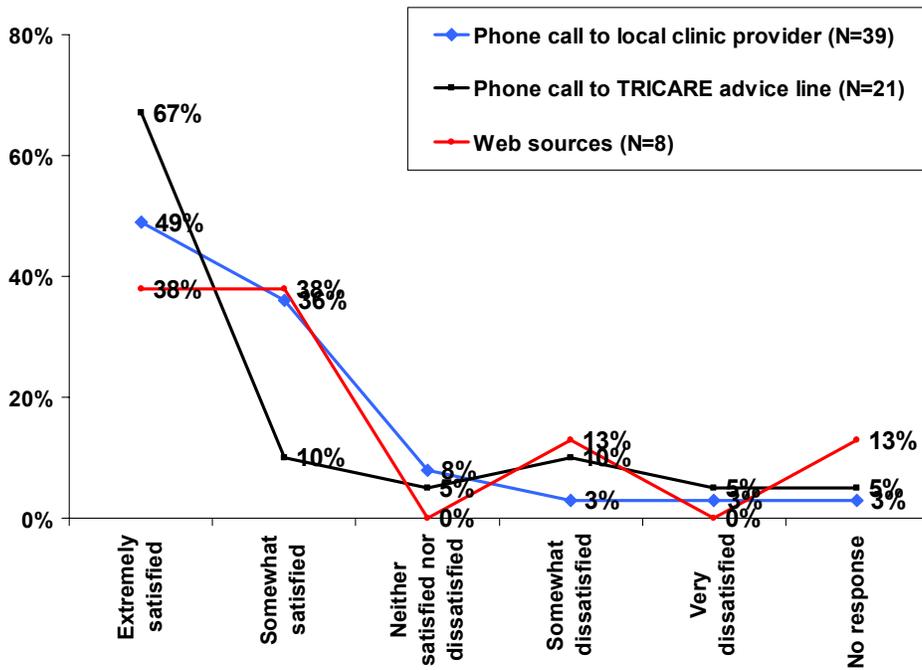
5. Was the person (if any) providing the medical advice courteous?

- Yes
- No
- Does not apply

Shown: Percentage responding "Yes."

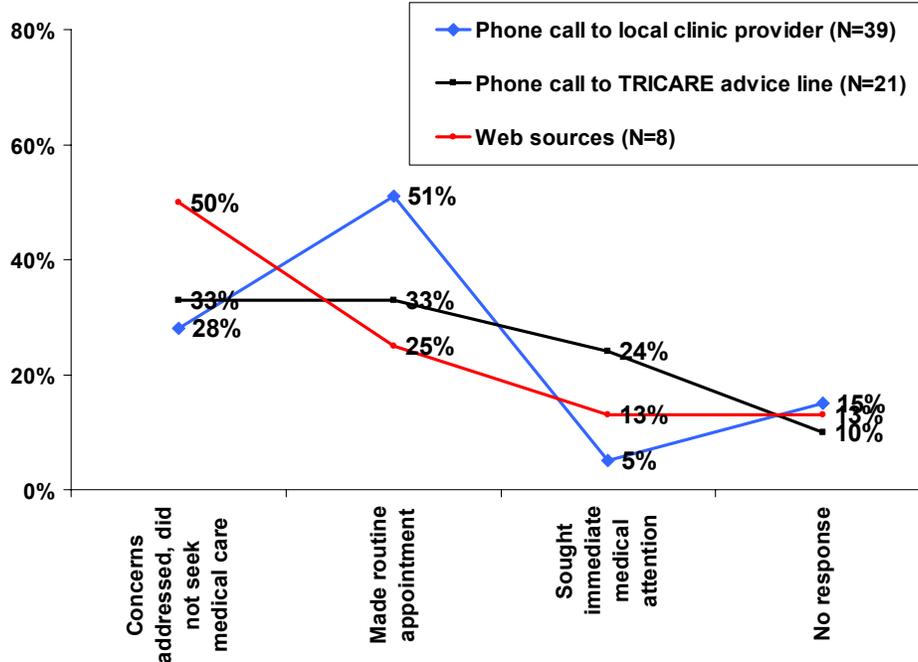


6. Please rate your overall satisfaction with the quality of the medical advice provided to you. (Mark the response that applies best.)



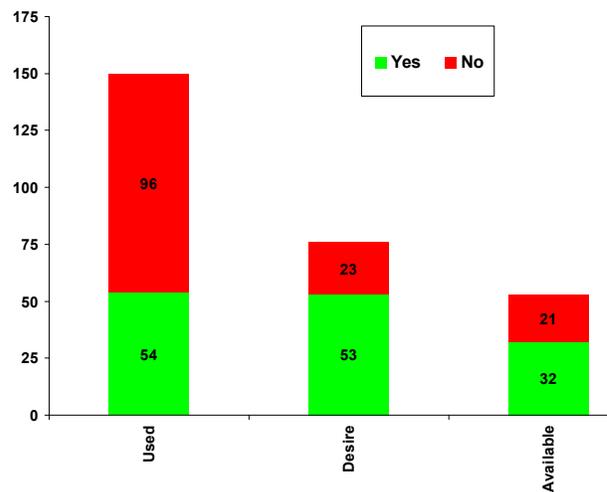
7. Based on the medical advice you received by phone or Web, what was the outcome? (Mark the response that applies best.)

- My question/concerns were addressed and I did not seek medical care (other than self-care)
- I made a routine appointment for care
- I sought medical care via an acute care clinic or emergency room.



8. Regardless of your responses above, please indicate your use and access to a live toll-free telephone TRICARE Health Care Information Line (HCIL), also sometimes known as Ask-A-Nurse. (Mark ALL responses that apply.)

- I have used it within the last year
- I have not used it within the last year
- I desire access to such a service
- I do not desire access to such a service
- This service is currently available to me
- This service is not currently available to me



Comment: A large proportion of respondents failed to choose an option, therefore only raw number responses are shown above.

NEXT STEPS

These results will be used to inform an upcoming series of nationwide telephone survey of 3,750 recent TRICARE users. The surveys will be deployed in March and September 2005.